

Internal Form for Oral History File

This file contains the oral history of: Ernestine Nettles

Recorded on: December 16th, 2025

Recorded by: Julissa Gomez Ruvalcaba

Recorded in (location): Oakland, California

For the Purpose of: Expanding Oakland's 16th street station oral histories including Oakland residents who lived in West Oakland, 16th street station train riders, employers, and family and friends.

Oral History Description

Narrator's Age:

Narrator City/State: Oakland, California

Brief Summary: In this interview, Ernestine Nettles, a native West Oakland resident, explains her connection to Oakland and 16th street station; her experience living on Wood Street as a child; who her parents were and their connection to 16th street station; the close-knit community her parents created in West Oakland; her experience riding the train to the South with her mother; the importance of 16th street station and West Oakland; the current state of 16th street station; how the 980 freeway affected and affects West Oakland's community; the decrease of train use with aviation; the difference between 16th street, Emeryville, and Jack London Square stations in relation to location and economical profits; how unions supported all Southern Pacific employees to advance; community support during layoffs; Southern traditions carried into Oakland; her vision for 16th street station as a community resource; coexistence between 16th street station and urban land development; her tradition when taking the train; the difference between the 16th street and Emeryville station; how new stations opening and other factors led to 16th street station closing; why we must include all stories when talking about 16th street station's history; the people behind running 16th street station.

Subject:

Holding Institution:

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File Nettles_Ernestine_part1_01_12152025_RR &

Nettles_Ernestine_part2_01_12152025_RR & Nettles_Ernestine_part3_01_12152025_RR: In this interview, Ernestine Nettles, a native West Oakland resident, explains her connection to Oakland and 16th street station; her experience living on Wood Street as a child; who her parents were and their connection to 16th street station; the close-knit community her parents created in West Oakland; her experience riding the train to the South with her mother; the importance of 16th street station and West Oakland; the current state of 16th street station; how the 980 freeway affected and affects West Oakland's community; the decrease of train use with aviation; the difference between 16th street, Emeryville, and Jack London Square stations in relation to location and economical profits; how unions supported all Southern Pacific employees to advance; community support during layoffs; Southern traditions carried into Oakland; her vision for 16th street station as a community resource; coexistence between 16th street station and urban land development; her tradition when taking the train; the difference between the 16th street and Emeryville station; how new stations opening and other factors led to 16th street station closing; why we must include all stories when talking about 16th street station's history; the people behind running 16th street station.

Interview with Ernestine Nettles

Interviewed by: Julissa Gomez Ruvalcaba

Transcriber: Julissa Gomez Ruvalcaba

[Interview #01: December 15, 2025]

[Begin Audio File: Nettles_Ernestine_part1_01_12152025_RR &

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[00:00:00] **Interviewer:** This is Julissa Gomez Ruvalcaba, the 2025 - 2026 Oral History Fellow for the California State Railroad Museum interviewing Ernestine. Today is December 15th, Monday at roughly 3:00 PM. [Ernestine looks down toward her phone] This oral history, more or less (in reference to the time stated), [Ernestine smiles] this oral history is being conducted in the home of Ernestine. Before we begin this recording, do I have your permission to record this oral history and the permission of State Parks to publish this transcript in part or its entirety? And you can say yes or no.

[00:00:36] **Ernestine:** Yes, you have my permission.

[00:00:39] **Interviewer:** [Flips the pages of notes] Awesome. Well thank you so much for, I guess, being here and for allowing me into your home and also for recording oral history. We're going to be talking about the 16th Street station. Different topics, I would say. But, before we get into that can you state your name?

[00:00:59] **Ernestine:** Ernestine Nettles.

[00:01:01] **Interviewer:** Can you tell me where you're from and like where you were born?

[00:01:05] **Ernestine:** I'm a native of Oakland. I was born here in Oakland. My parents took me home to my first home in Oakland—was on Wood Street right down the street from the 16th Street Station. And that was where we lived until April the 15th in 1955 when we moved to this home.

[00:01:32] **Interviewer:** Mm-hmm. How was it living on Wood Street?

[00:01:36] **Ernestine:** Oh! Well, I was a little girl on Wood Street.

[00:01:39] **Interviewer:** Mm-hmm.

[00:01:40] **Ernestine:** So for me, I saw everything through a child's eye. When we moved off of Wood Street, I was four years old. And we lived right

across the street from Congressman Dellums' grandparents. And like down the street from Sarah and Tom Bowden, so growing up I saw a lot of the people who formed the Sleeping Car Porters Union. I saw a lot of the Negro League baseball players. I saw a lot of the great entertainers that would come down Wood Street, going to Slim Jenkins on 7th Street. So they'd get off at 16th and Wood, which is where the train station was, and they were going to 7th and Wood, which was one of the entertainment—the Black entertainment meccas of the world at the time. So as a kid growing up, you were in the neighborhood. The porch on the house where we lived was as long as the front of the house. So my dad had put a gate up [moves hand up and motions a wall forming] and I would ride my tricycle in front of that, on that porch until usually until one of my godparents Charlie Stones came home and he would be out front and I could be out front with him riding my little tricycle while he was doing whatever he was doing. So that, that's—it was a great place to live. It was a strong sense of community. Everyone knew everyone. Everyone looked out for everyone. It was just as my—I have fond memories of being on Union Street as a child. I I don't have—I'm not the person with the bad memories.

[00:03:45] **Interviewer:** Hmm.

[00:03:46] **Ernestine:** There were characters in the neighborhood, so, don't get me wrong. But, it was just a great place to be. I don't remember people locking their doors. I don't remember. I don't re, I don't recall, but like I said, I was a child, so I didn't see any violence. There were people who did what they did in the neighborhood, but never anything to the detriment, particularly of me as a child.

[00:04:20] **Interviewer:** Mm-hmm. And then from Wood Street your family then moved to Union?

[00:04:26] **Ernestine:** Mm-hmm.

[00:04:26] **Interviewer:** Which is where we're currently at right now.

[00:04:28] **Ernestine:** Mm-hmm.

[00:04:30] **Interviewer:** I guess is, would you say there was a, a big difference from going from Wood Street to then Union in terms of, um, because the proximity of the train station?

[00:04:43] **Ernestine:** [Phones rings and she moves toward it to turn it off] Um, there, there wasn't a big change for me coming to Union Street because when I came to Union Street, we knew practically everyone on the block. I had a set of godparents who were on the block. My parents had friends who lived on this block. So there, it wasn't a big transition for me. And because I was so young, it wasn't like I was leaving my friends from elementary school to go to another school.

[00:05:17] **Interviewer:** Mm-hmm.

[00:05:17] **Ernestine:** So that made the difference. And once we moved in this block, I was one of the younger children on the block. And Mr. Young, who had an older son, Paul, he and his father and uncles worked with my father at Naval Air Station, so he introduced me to all the kids in the neighborhood. So it was just one transition to the next [motions with both hands left to right].

[00:05:48] **Interviewer:** Since you're talking about your father, can we go more into, a little bit more into who he was and his connection to the 16th Street Station?

[00:05:59] **Ernestine:** My father came to California. He was released from the Army World War II at what's now called the Oakland Army Base, but it was then called Camp Knight, at least in our community that's what we called it. And he and my mother migrated here during the Great Depression from New Orleans. My mother was in New Orleans. He was here when he was released from the service. She came here. Her sister and brother-in-law were here. And when my parents first came. They lived in the house with my aunt and uncle. My aunt and uncle subsequently bought a home, moved to 17th Street and my parents stayed there until they bought this home. But my father came here as a result of being released from the army here in Oakland.

[00:06:56] **Interviewer:** Mm-hmm.

[00:06:57] **Ernestine:** And he was originally from Moss Point, Mississippi. And so, he left Moss Point, went to New Orleans. I'm not sure if he joined the army in New Orleans, but I would think that was probably where he signed up for the army. And he went to France, did his tour, and came back. And so he came back, he went to work for the railroad. He was a waiter on the train. And the story I get is after. Well be, prior to my being born, he went to work for a Naval Air station, and that's where he stayed until he retired. My mother, who worked for Southern Pacific, she was there until 1956. And in

1956 they laid her off and she never went back to work again outside the home. She was always at home. [smiles]

[00:08:08] **Interviewer:** A, a homemaker, a stay-at-home mom then.

[00:08:10] **Ernestine:** Mm-hmm.

[00:08:10] **Interviewer:** She transitioned.

[00:08:11] **Ernestine:** Yeah. I remember when my mother was laid off, she was going to try and do days' work where she cleaned folks, houses and all. And I remember when my father came in that evening and we set to have dinner, and he told her *he wanted her to stay at home and take care of he and I. And that he would do whatever he had to do for her to do that*, and that's what happened.

[00:08:42] **Interviewer:** Do you, what do you think was the reason that he wanted her to be a— because a homemaker rather than try to find some work elsewhere?

[00:08:54] **Ernestine:** My parents were always people who lived within their means. When I came along, my parents were 40 years my senior so, they had not had any children. Both my mother and my father were victims of the experiment on Black people, so in the South. So they couldn't, they couldn't have children. So when they came here my father was in the army with one of my biological uncles and they adopted me. They went and picked me up from the hospital. I was born September 29th, and they picked me up from the hospital when I was three days old, formally adopted me. And that was that. That's a whole nother story.

[00:10:00] **Interviewer:** Mm-hmm.

[00:10:00] **Ernestine:** But that's what happened.

[00:10:02] **Interviewer:** Mm-hmm.

[00:10:03] **Ernestine:** So their world evolved around me when I came along most of their friends' children were 10 plus years older than I. Most of their nieces and nephews' children were my contemporaries. So, when I came along, I was the little, the little girl.

[00:10:34] **Interviewer:** Mm-hmm.

[00:10:34] **Ernestine:** My mother's aunts, I didn't know any of my grandparents, but my mother's aunts who were my great aunts and uncles, they were like my grandparents. And I have no idea what it feels like to have a day on this earth not knowing I was loved because love conquered all. My father surrounded me by a group of men who were his good friends, who made a vow to him that they would always look out for me, and they did that until they passed away. Mm-hmm.

[00:11:19] **Interviewer:** It sounds like you were in a very, I would say, loving community—

[00:11:22] **Ernestine:** I was.

[00:11:23] **Interviewer:** A loving and a loving home.

[00:11:24] **Ernestine:** I was.

[00:11:27] **Interviewer:** And I wanna go into that a little bit about like, you know, the living community, living home, specifically with the connection to 16th Street Station. Can you explain what is your connection to the station?

[00:11:40] **Ernestine:** My connection to the station, aside from the fact that my mother worked at Southern Pacific as a coach cleaner and my aunt worked there and a lot of my mother's friends. 'Cause at that time women cleaned the coaches. That was the jobs that the women had. The men ran on the road. Most of them were Porters or waiters on the road, or baggage men, et cetera, et cetera. So, particularly when my uncle would be coming in from— he usually ran the Chicago trip. So when he would be coming in, it was a big thing 'cause we'd go down to the train station. And we'd be there to pick him up when he got off, when he got off the train. And so that was my connection to the train station. Train station was beautiful. And there was a lot of activity around the train station. And, and you passed the train station to go to the ballpark to see the Negro League play baseball [motions with her hand each step someone takes when visiting the station]. So the train station was the heart of our community. When you had family members who were coming here from the South, everybody came on the train. Very few— there were some families, I know people drove here from the South, but for most people, they arrived in Oakland on the train from wherever they came in this country. They arrived in Oakland on the train and they, the 16th street station was the last stop on the train. So that was my connection.

[00:13:31] **Ernestine:** And when we would go to visit in the South, you got on the train. Well, because my mother, because my mother worked for

Southern Pacific cleaning the trains, we always got on the train in the yard and we would— she would always make sure that we were in the car that Black people would be sent to when we got below the Mason Dixon line so that we would not have to change cars on the train. And so even when we were going out of the—when we were leaving here going south we always got on the train at 16th street Station. And in those days when you were getting on the train. You had to get all dressed up to get on the train [smiles]. And then once you were on the train and the train pulled out, your mother would, would change you to your play clothes. And, but when we were going in the dining car for dinner we would still—she'd wash me up. We'd get dressed and we'd go in the dining car. And gone.

[00:14:49] **Interviewer:** Was it like a special event to go on the train or was it more so kind of like a casual thing for you and your family?

[00:14:59] **Ernestine:** Well, we were traveling. And it was in the summertime it was usually me and my mother. I don't recall my father going with us during the summer to the South, but I do recall him going during the winter. Why? I don't know. But yes, it was, it was, we were getting on the train to go to New Orleans because my mother's family was in New Orleans and my father's family was in Mississippi. So it was a big deal to get on the train. And then of course, during that time period, we still knew— my parents still knew people who were the Porters and the waiters and all on the train. Although my father was no longer doing it, like I said, my uncle was. And so within our community, the workers on the train looked out for everybody. So if your parents wanted to send you to New Orleans and you'd get on the train that Porter or waiter they were gonna look out for you until you got there. That was, that was the way of life, at least with the people that I knew. I can't recall anyone that had a bad experience on the train with people who were out of the community.

[00:16:35] **Interviewer:** Mm-hmm.

[00:16:37] **Ernestine:** Yeah.

[00:16:40] **Interviewer:** I'm just thinking. So it was very much like a, a, a close-knit community then that started in Wood Street transitioned to the station and it continued on even when you took the station to go visit other family members in different parts of the U.S.?

[00:16:59] **Ernestine:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Yeah.

[00:17:03] **Interviewer:** You said, a bit ago that this 16th street station was the heart of the community. Can I make the stretch to say it was the heart of Oakland as well?

[00:17:16] **Ernestine:** Of course, of course.

[00:17:17] **Interviewer:** Can you, can you go a little bit more, can you go into that? Like why, why that the case?

[00:17:21] **Ernestine:** Well, because even wealthy people who had private cars that were, they were, they were all down at 16th Street Station. Aretha Franklin had—I heard a story of Aretha Franklin having a private train car, and it was at the 16th Street station. And so everybody came to the station, came to 16th Street Station [shrugs] and it was a starting point and the ending point of the transportation to California and to the Bay Area. And when we would get on the train going South. There was a story that, well, my grandfather passed away when I was about eight weeks old. My mother had an uncle who passed away during that time period. So my mother and I were on the train from—I'm a baby now, I'm not. I am a infant. My mother's aunt gets on the train in New Orleans, be-, I mean, in Los Angeles because it was her brother who passed away in New Orleans. But they got us on the train and we were in a sleeping car which is kind of unheard of at that time. So they positioned us on the, in the sleeping car so that the white people never knew there were these Black people on the train with this baby.

[00:19:05] **Interviewer:** Were Black people not supposed to be in the sleeping cars?

[00:19:08] **Ernestine:** I guess so.

[00:19:10] **Interviewer:** Oh, okay.

[00:19:11] **Ernestine:** I guess so. Or certainly when they got below the Mason-Dixon line they weren't supposed to be in a sleeping car because that was reserved for white people. And so we got to New Orleans— We got to Los Angeles, and my great aunt gets on the train to help my mother with me in the, in the sleeping car. And I slept right on to New Orleans and while we were in New Orleans for my great uncle's funeral, my grandfather became his—he, he became quite ill subsequently passed away. But the story was, was that he lived long enough to see me and then he passed away.

[00:20:01] **Interviewer:** Mmmh.

[00:20:02] **Ernestine:** And my father flew on an airplane. In 1951, 1950, 51' to New Orleans, and he and my mother came back on the train with, was my mother, my father, and my great aunt.

[00:20:25] **Interviewer:** Mm-hmm. Did your parents ever discuss reasons that they stayed in Oakland rather than—

[00:20:32] **Ernestine:** Well, the jobs were here.

[00:20:33] **Interviewer:** Mmmh.

[00:20:34] **Ernestine:** The jobs were here. You know we had Naval Air station, Naval Supply, Quaker Oats, the Oakland Army base. There were jobs here in all those industries that supported the Army base, Naval Air, and all prop, uh, the propellers. Propellers for airplanes were at one point made on 7th Street so, people had all these jobs. It was the mecca for jobs. That's why we had so many people migrating North from the South because this is where the good paying jobs were, and this is where there was more opportunity for Blacks here than there was in the South at the time.

[00:21:20] **Interviewer:** Mm-hmm.

[00:21:21] **Ernestine:** So they came here and my parents came and like I said my father went to work on the railroad then he went to work for Naval Air Station. My mother went to work for Southern Pacific, so they stayed. I don't think it ever crossed their mind about going back during that time.

[00:21:40] **Interviewer:** Mm-hmm. Did they ever tell any stories about their time working at the station?

[00:21:51] **Ernestine:** My parents, well, my father was always getting, when he was a waiter, he was getting on and off the train. But that was before I was born.

[00:22:01] **Interviewer:** Mmmh.

[00:22:02] **Ernestine:** Who would know more about what was actually happening in the station would be Tom Bowden Jr. Because he was a shoeshine boy at the 16th Street Station and he would leave the 16th Street station and go down on 7th Street to Slim Jenkins. And there were all, there

was this group of young men who shined shoes all over town because at that time people dressed a lot different and all the men had shined shoes. So that was what he did, but he's older than I am. But he can tell you more about what was going on in the train station. You know, like I said, I was just the little kid on a porch kinda watching everybody. And at the time I, I didn't know what I was seeing until I was older and I realized, "*Oh my God, Mr. Dellums grandson was C.L. Dellums*" and you'd see all these tall distinguished looking men and they were working on forming the Sleeping Car Porters Union.

[00:23:25] **Interviewer:** So then, I guess your interactions with the station were one, you would go to the station and take visits there, but your parents didn't really sit at a dinner table and tell stories about their work or bring the story home from something that had happened?

[00:23:42] **Ernestine:** Mm-hmm. My parents didn't do that. And even with my uncle who worked on the road, I don't remember Uncle Brown sitting down talking about things that happened. On the train, other than I do remember them talking about how they worked on the train. He worked on the train, and yet at night, those same workers could not, they didn't have, they didn't have sleeping quarters for them, so they would sleep on the floors, on those hard tables.

[00:24:25] **Interviewer:** Mm-hmm. I'm curious because we're talking so much about the station, and you said it was like the heart of the station and a lot of, I would say like social movements happened with it.

[00:24:40] **Ernestine:** Mm-hmm.

[00:24:41] **Interviewer:** Have you had the chance to see the station in its current state?

[00:24:45] **Ernestine:** Yes.

[00:24:46] **Interviewer:** And with your, with your take on, like what had happened to the station? Given how you said it was the heart of, of Oakland.

[00:24:57] **Ernestine:** For me to see the station the way it is now is heartbreaking because I knew the station when it was clean. It was a beautiful station like most stations across the nation. I don't know why Oakland Station deteriorated. So, because you know how Los Angeles is, you know how New York is, you know how Chicago is. We know how New Orleans

is. I don't know what happened. I have no idea why it deteriorated the way it did, but the uniqueness of the Oakland station is, is the only one that I know of in the heart of a Black community.

[00:25:40] **Interviewer:** Mm-hmm. [Ernestine smiles]

[00:25:43] **Ernestine:** The other stations were downtown Chicago, New York, Los Angeles. They were all downtown. But Oakland station was in the heart of the Black community, so I'm going to say was probably part of systemic racism that that station was allowed to deteriorate the way it, and how the trains, the passenger trains stopped coming to that station. As you know, now we have the C.L. Dellums station, which is in Jack London Square and then the Oakland station just sits there.

[00:26:30] **Interviewer:** Mm-hmm.

[00:26:31] **Ernestine:** So the question becomes, how did that happen?

[00:26:35] **Interviewer:** Do you, because there's like a few things. My timeline's gonna be perhaps a bit off. So there's the freeway that happened, so that, but that is more so. I would say made like a wound within West Oakland with the freeway.

[00:26:51] **Ernestine:** Which one? The Cypress Freeway or the 980 Freeway?

[00:26:55] **Interviewer:** I think the 980. But there's two of them.

[00:26:57] **Ernestine:** 980 is the one off of Brush, Brush Street.

[00:26:59] **Interviewer:** The one that's nearby.

[00:27:01] **Ernestine:** That's Cypress.

[00:27:02] **Interviewer:** That's Cypress. That one then.

[00:27:03] **Ernestine:** Right.

[00:27:04] **Interviewer:** Right. And so do you think, so there's, there's gonna be like two questions, but do you think that the freeway, the one that's near the station, had anything kind of maybe influenced a reason not to put

money into this station or to, um, how do you say it, to renovate it? To kind of do a—

[00:27:28] **Ernestine:** To renovate the station?

[00:27:29] **Interviewer:** Yeah.

[00:27:29] **Ernestine:** I don't think that the station—I can't say. Well, yes, the, because the Cypress Freeway and the 980 Freeway were all erected during my lifetime, and I remember Black people not wanting the freeway, Cypress Freeway or 980 freeway to come through our community, but they came through the community anyway. The way this freeway is now. It could have always been that way, but who's gonna listen to a bunch of Black people saying, "*No, we don't want the freeway coming through our community.*" And as a result of the freeway coming through our community, we have all these respiratory illness. I, it is just compounded the health issues of people in West Oakland.

[00:28:28] **Interviewer:** Mm-hmm.

[00:28:30] **Ernestine:** I think it's interesting that when you're on the 13 or you're on the 580, there's no big trucks, but 880 we get all the pollution. And we get the pollution from the port of Oakland. The trucks going in and out of the port of Oakland.

[00:28:57] **Interviewer:** I've never thought about that before.

[00:28:59] **Ernestine:** Yeah. [smiles]

[00:29:01] **Interviewer:** Mm-hmm.

[00:29:02] **Ernestine:** I mean, that's a fact.

[00:29:03] **Interviewer:** Mm-hmm.

[00:29:05] **Ernestine:** So what do we think? And then we, we had Oakland begin to lose, its its financial stability with Black people. When Ron Dellums became the mayor of Oakland, I mean the congressional rep from Oakland took his stand against the war. So what did they do? They slapped him on the wrist by closing all the naval bases here in the Bay Area, which was the economic engine for Black people so Black people started losing their jobs. They lose their jobs. They start losing their homes. Or they don't have the

resources to maintain their homes. So what happens? You create blight and you create blight through an economic downfall.

[00:30:01] **Interviewer:** Would you say you could kind of see the time when it went down in terms of the activity for the station? I spoke with someone for another oral history and they said that in like the 1950s is when they saw the station in terms of activity go down. And I found that really interesting because the station didn't officially close until like the 1990s.

[00:30:32] **Ernestine:** But the trains weren't coming in and out of the, out of the Oakland station at that time.

[00:30:36] **Interviewer:** Right, right.

[00:30:38] **Ernestine:** So,

[00:30:39] **Interviewer:** So, mm-hmm.

[00:30:43] **Ernestine:** I don't, and the other thing that happened as aviation became more available people stopped taking the train and started flying everywhere.

[00:30:55] **Interviewer:** Mm-hmm.

[00:30:55] **Ernestine:** So I would say about 1960— I'm trying to remember the last time, probably about 1962, 63'. For my family, that was the time when we stopped using the train and flying.

[00:31:18] **Interviewer:** Mmmh. Okay. Because, so like kind of in the 1960s in general, your family would just transition all the way just to flying rather than—

[00:31:32] **Ernestine:** We would fly or we would drive.

[00:31:34] **Interviewer:** Mmmh. And did that have to do because the, the trains just weren't stopping at 16th Street anymore?

[00:31:43] **Ernestine:** No, you could, you know, when we would drive, it would take us three days. [shrugs one side of shoulder]

[00:31:49] **Interviewer:** Mm-hmm.

[00:31:50] **Ernestine:** When we would take the train, it would take three days. Now you can go get on a airplane in four hours, you're there. So you had more time to spend with your family and friends. So it— and the aviation, it just became a way of life. Most people fly, people who are flying now could take a train, but instead when you take a train, that's a big deal. And I know even for myself, I'll take the train somewhere, but I only take it one way and I, I'll either fly there, take the train back, or I'll take the train there and fly home.

[00:32:33] **Interviewer:** Mm-hmm.

[00:32:34] **Ernestine:** So, very seldom do people get on the train now round trip. Some people do, but as a rule, you go one way on the train and you fly the other.

[00:32:50] **Interviewer:** I've done the same thing.

[00:32:50] **Ernestine:** Mm-hmm. [nods head]

[00:32:51] **Interviewer:** I've done the same thing. It can be quite long come sometimes

[00:32:54] **Ernestine:** Right.

[00:32:55] **Interviewer:** To do it otherwise. Do you—so there was an opening of Jack London station.

[00:33:03] **Ernestine:** Right.

[00:33:03] **Interviewer:** And that's kind of like, I would say the station a lot of people take or Emery.

[00:33:07] **Ernestine:** Yeah.

[00:33:07] **Ernestine:** The C.L. Dellums station.

[00:33:09] **Interviewer:** Yes. So the C.L. Dellums station.

[00:33:11] **Ernestine:** Mm-hmm.

[00:33:12] **Interviewer:** I know as Jack London, but other people know as C.L. Dellums.

[00:33:14] **Ernestine:** Right.

[00:33:14] **Interviewer:** I didn't know that. Do you think that that had an influence on taking away, let's say like traffic from 16th Street Station at all?

[00:33:27] **Ernestine:** Well, now you have to remember around stations is an economic base also.

[00:33:32] **Interviewer:** Mm-hmm.

[00:33:32] **Ernestine:** So when you talk about the economic base around, around the 16th Street Station, most of those businesses were black owned. Let's not forget that. [moves hand around to emphasize]

[00:33:43] **Interviewer:** Mm-hmm.

[00:33:43] **Ernestine:** When you go to Jack London, most of those businesses are white owned. Maybe that's just my little pea brain looking at it through a different, different lens. But that's what I see. And, you know, Emeryville Station has sit there, but nothing around it.

[00:34:04] **Interviewer:** But it's still active.

[00:34:05] **Ernestine:** But it's very active. It's very active. And the 16th, around the 16th Street station is not nearly as active as Jack as Emeryville. And so it sits between C.L Dellums and Emeryville. The activity is around C.L. Dellums and Emeryville and here sits the 16th Street station. [Uses the right hand as reference to C.L. Dellums station and left hand as Emeryville signifying the distance between the two stations then moves hand together closing the distance indicating 16th street station] So why can't the 16th Street station have some of that activity also? [Uses left hand to close the distance] Because we know that transportation is a big thing in this nation. You've gotta get goods from one point to another. And we don't see the activity in West Oakland around the 16th Street station that we once saw [left hand gesture outward toward direction of 16th street station].

[00:34:57] **Interviewer:** Because a lot of the, the businesses are closed right around 16th Street Station?

[00:35:02] **Ernestine:** Correct.

[00:35:03] **Interviewer:** So it's not because you spoke about 7th Street, 7th Street, you, you spoke about Wood Street, how it had entertainers, people to go to Slim Shady. Oh, not that. Slim Shady, not.

[00:35:13] **Ernestine:** Slim Jenkins.

[00:35:13] **Interviewer:** Slim Jenkins. My goodness. Yeah.

[00:35:15] **Ernestine:** We had Slim Jenkins.

[00:35:16] **Interviewer:** Mm-hmm.

[00:35:16] **Ernestine:** Esther Orbit room. [counts the names on her fingers] There was, those were the two biggies. And so you had people who came from all over the country. I mean, when Mr. Jenkins died, there were all these great Black entertainers who had performed at Slim Jenkins [lifts hands up then drops them on lap].

[00:35:35] **Interviewer:** Mm-hmm.

[00:35:39] **Ernestine:** So, and they all were there to pay their respect to a, a man who had an establishment that gave them an opportunity. Because Black entertainment was here in Oakland, 7th Street, San Francisco and Fillmore Street, so those were the two Black entertainment areas in the Bay Area.

[00:36:06] **Interviewer:** Mm-hmm. Do you know when—so were you still like a child when, um, the businesses around 16th Street stations started to close down? Or were you like slightly or were you older?

[00:36:23] **Ernestine:** I was slightly older.

[00:36:26] **Interviewer:** Mm-hmm. Because you said it was in like 1952 is when your, your mother and then, then your father. They got laid off.

[00:36:38] **Ernestine:** Well, my mother got laid off in 56'.

[00:36:40] **Interviewer:** 56'.

[00:36:41] **Ernestine:** My father went to work before I was born, I guess, for the stability of the family because my, my father was one of those men [clasp hands together] who believed in taking care of his wife and his

daughter, and that's what he did. So his job with Naval Air Station was much more stable than his job running, being a waiter on the, on the railroad. And those were good jobs, don't get me wrong, especially after the union was formed.

[00:37:16] **Interviewer:** Mm-hmm. Can you maybe go a little bit more into that about. I do know that a lot of people they would come to Oakland and they would work for Southern, Southern Pacific. And they were good jobs, right? And in comparison to other jobs they may have had before but there were still some issues related to them when they become unionized in what ways did it, did things improve?

[00:37:45] **Ernestine:** Based upon what I know, for instance, like I was telling you about the waiters who, who had no place to sleep at night. Now they got sleeping quarters [uses both hands to show the sleeping quarters]. They got restrooms [uses both hands to show restrooms] because before [does a rewind motion with her fingers] they didn't have restrooms, as I understand it. And you maybe if you spoke to a child of someone who ran on the road whose parents may have told those stories. They may have way more insight on that than I did. Paul Cobb, who owns the Oakland Post newspaper he would be a good person to talk to because I believe his father was one of the waiters on the air, on the train, but I'm not sure. Don't hold me to that.

[00:38:45] **Interviewer:** Mm-hmm.

[00:38:46] **Ernestine:** But I'm sure he knows a lot.

[00:38:48] **Interviewer:** Okay. Right, because your, your parents didn't really talk about their experience— when you would take the train with your mother. Was your father working the train? I'm just curious.

[00:38:58] **Ernestine:** No, no. My father, my father stopped working the train before I was born, and I was born in 1950.

[00:39:04] **Interviewer:** Oh, okay. Okay. I see. I understand now.

[00:39:07] **Ernestine:** Yeah. And my mother worked at Naval Air Station until, I mean, at the Southern Pacific until 1956. Now, no one said anything to me, but knowing Black history, the way I know it, I think that my mother was laid off because she and my father had now bought a home, and shortly after they purchased the home, they had to buy a new car. Well, when

something happens with someone, economics, that's how you gain some control over them. It's like, anybody. You get a mortgage, you gotta go to work [clasp hands together].

[00:39:53] **Ernestine:** So they laid my mother off and my mother was, like I said, my mother was going to go do day's work and my dad just—she and my dad made that decision and he made the. I can honestly say from 1956 until 1970—for sure 1970—My father never bought a new suit. He made that sacrifice for his family. I realize it now because when I was coming up we did a lot of things together. And I realize now that they were ma—they were juggling to do the things that they did to give me the life that I had.

[00:40:49] **Interviewer:** Mm-hmm.

[00:40:50] **Ernestine:** And that I have now. And I think there were a lot of, I know there were a lot of families that did that because as children, we were children, our parents were, were struggling, but a lot of us didn't realize what was going on. You know, we, I still, matter of fact, I was with some of my elementary school friends on this past Saturday. And on Sunday—on Mondays was red beans and rice day. That was a carryover from the South. Wednesday was spaghetti and meatball day [the doorbell rings]. That was a carryover from the South. Fridays was always seafood, fish of some sort that was a carryover from the South.

[00:41:51] **Interviewer:** What were some of the other traditions that you saw that were being carried on from the South to Oakland?

[00:41:57] **Ernestine:** Well, our whole lifestyle. [crosses arms over each other] We grew our gardens. And when you look at public housing now, if you notice over in Campbell Village, you'll see units that have these, these huge backyards. [demonstrates with her hands the size of the units] Well, during that time, everyone grew their vegetables. We grew most our fruits and vegetables. We didn't go to the store. And then this time, what is this? Oh no, because when the summer harvest would occur, people would can the fruits and vegetables. So we had something all year long. People would can, keep, people would make jellies and jams. So we had fresh fruits and vegetables all the time. That was a way of life. As a kid, we could tell you who had the sweetest plums, orange. We knew where all the sweet vegetables, fruits were in West Oakland because that was the way of life [shrugs shoulders and smiles]. So let's just say your family was good at tomatoes then if your, if your family grew tomatoes better than mine, but my family grew beans better than yours. Everybody grew, everybody canned, and everybody exchanged [does a back and forth motion with her hands.

Phone rings and she looks down toward it then places it down on the coffee table in front of her]. And there were still people in the neighborhood who were, who were hungry and all somewhat, but just like we were, we were talking about Oakland public schools. Those ladies would get in that cafeteria four or five o'clock in the morning and we had a meal every day. Every child got something to eat and this was before we had the 'WIC' program and whatever programs they have now [does quotation marks when she says WIC program].

[00:44:06] **Interviewer:** Mm-hmm.

[00:44:07] **Ernestine:** And that's why when the Black Panther party came along with the breakfast program it was so significant because when it came along those ladies were no longer in the cafeterias at the schools. Everything now is automated. But then you and everybody knew the ladies who worked in the cafeteria because usually they lived in the community. So it was, it was just a totally different way of living.

[00:44:43] **Interviewer:** I guess, compared to how it's now.

[00:44:45] **Ernestine:** Compared. Oh, certainly to compared to how it is now.

[00:44:50] **Interviewer:** I kind of wanna go into, I guess, like the present of like, how, how it is now. How. 'Cause I, like, I, I connect 16th Street Station with West Oakland just 'cause I think that the state of West Oakland is kind of like reflected in 16th Street Station.

[00:45:07] **Ernestine:** Mm-hmm.

[00:45:07] **Interviewer:** I would say like the lack of investment.

[00:45:09] **Ernestine:** Mm-hmm.

[00:45:11] **Interviewer:** Can you explain to me like the significance of what is 16th Street? What is significance of 16th Street Station by itself, but also was the significance of 16th Street in relation to West Oakland?

[00:45:27] **Ernestine:** Well, I can't separate 16th Street Station from West Oakland [crosses arms over body]. It's in West Oakland so how do I separate it? [shakes her head side to side] I can't separate it. If you are asking me what do I envision? I would love to see A) the trains coming back through 16th Street Station. I would love to see 16th Street Station have a Museum

of Black History in West Oakland history on that site. I would love to see a beautiful hotel there. I would love to see that become an entertainment venue because it, there's still a lot of land there to do a lot of things [demonstrates with hands the amount of land available]. Where the West Oakland Blues Society, you know that on the 2nd and 4th Friday and Saturday, you can go there and hear that music, the music of the time. I think that West Oakland—16th Street Station has the potential to be a mecca for Oakland and make it a destination and have it back in our community like it once was. We've now got the Prescott. [hand gestures to the right] We got the Ballers [hand gestures to the right]. But what about all those other things we had around the 16th Street station? [does a circular motion with her hands indicating the 16th street station in the middle of the two locations] If I could do anything I wanted to do, that's what I would do.

[00:47:09] **Interviewer:** Mm-hmm.

[00:47:10] **Ernestine:** I think that the station, I have not been inside in a long time, and I think that the station could be revitalized and I think this, the station could be the heart of the community again. It could be a place where community groups could meet. There's no reason why, as I see it, that could not happen [gestures with both hands left to right then points to self].

[00:47:38] **Interviewer:** Mm-hmm. Are you aware that currently there's plans for like land development?

[00:47:44] **Ernestine:** Mm-hmm.

[00:47:44] **Interviewer:** For the 16th street station?

[00:47:46] **Ernestine:** Yes.

[00:47:46] **Interviewer:** Essentially trying to create condos as close as they can to 16th Street Station.

[00:47:51] **Ernestine:** I'm aware of that.

[00:47:53] **Interviewer:** Sorry?

[00:47:55] **Ernestine:** I said I'm aware of that.

[00:47:56] **Interviewer:** Yeah. So with what you have envisioned for 16th Street Station. I guess what do the condos really like signify then?

[00:48:11] **Ernestine:** Well, I know that I signed a petition there was a, we were working to keep anything from going up in front of the station [uses right hand to gesture toward her right] to go on the side of the station [uses both hands to gesture to the left]. So if the condos and all are going to be there, that's fine—upper level [moves both hands up signifying the upper level]. But down below—street level, you could still have all those other things going on [moves hands down and gestures in circular motioning the street level].

[00:48:39] **Interviewer:** So I guess like the condos and 16th street station could, could still coexist?

[00:48:44] **Ernestine:** Could be side by side. Of course they could coexist.

[00:48:47] **Interviewer:** Okay.

[00:48:48] **Ernestine:** Of course they could coexist. Mm-hmm.

[00:48:52] **Interviewer:** And still have it be publicly accessible then?

[00:48:54] **Ernestine:** Exactly.

[00:48:55] **Interviewer:** Okay.

[00:48:57] **Ernestine:** Yeah. Why, why, why couldn't it? [shrugs shoulders and smiles]

[00:49:01] **Interviewer:** I don't know. It's an idea. Because currently at the moment it's not pub. When I say publicly accessible, I mean it's like closed off like a gate. You can't like physically get in without the permission—

[00:49:14] **Ernestine:** Right.

[00:49:14] **Interviewer:** —from the landowner. So I guess if they make the condos, I wonder if people would still be able to, you know, step onto 16th Street station? Though it is in its current state. Perhaps—

[00:49:32] **Ernestine:** 16th street station could take on the ambiance of the Oakland auditorium. There's the station. There's the parking. Beside it would be the condos. Below the condos could be the museum, could be community space. There are all those things that could be on, on the ground level. [gestures from right to left indicating each item then counts on finger

the items] Which is something that's happening across this country, across the world, not just this country where there's housing above [moves both hand upward] and below [lowers hands indicating ground level]. There's retail, restaurants, schools, just down on another level [counts on fingers the items].

[00:50:13] **Interviewer:** Mm-hmm.

[00:50:14] **Ernestine:** On that ground level.

[00:50:17] **Interviewer:** Okay. That's the first I've heard of it coexisting.

[00:50:23] **Ernestine:** Oh, of course it could coexist. Why, why, why shouldn't it? [smiles]

[00:50:29] **Interviewer:** I'm not entirely sure. [Interviewer and Ernestine smile and laugh] As I looked down on my notes. I'm trying to think, is there anything that you want to add in, in regards to 16th Street Station? Perhaps you talked a little bit about how it was taking the train. If you wanna go more into that detail or your connection more whatsoever?

[00:50:54] **Ernestine:** Usually once a year. I haven't, I, I didn't do it this past year, but usually once a year I fly to Los Angeles and I take the train back. And I do that because that's one of the most beautiful rides—just the scenery. After we have a snow, I take the train to Reno and I fly back. I had to go to Denver to a convention a couple of years ago, and I took the train to Denver and I flew back. I would do that, that trip different. I would fly there and then take the train back. The train from Seattle to Oakland is a beautiful ride. So just reintroducing ourself. I find the train to not be as stressful.

[00:52:02] **Interviewer:** Mm-hmm.

[00:52:04] **Ernestine:** And in remembrance of Black people migrating here on the train, I always take a shoebox.

[00:52:13] **Interviewer:** What's a shoe?

[00:52:14] **Ernestine:** And a shoebox was our lunch. Usually had fried chicken, pound cake, Vienna sausage, crackers, fruit, this, and, and it would be packed in a, in a shoe, in a shoebox with foil and all. Because remember this lunch sometime had to last you three days. And I think when I think back on it now, I think one of the reasons people got on the train with so

much. Black people got on the train with so much food was A) the economics, but B) for fear, particularly when they got below the Mason Dixon line, they wouldn't be able to get anything. So they always wanted to make sure they had something to eat.

[00:53:10] **Ernestine:** And I remember being on a train with—because kids, you get on a train, you automatically gravitate to one another, so you have your little friends and, and people would share what they had: poundcake, cheese. It, it, there was a whole, there, there was a whole culture around getting on a train in your shoebox. And I was an adult and I was coming from. I was taking the train from Los Angeles to here, and I had poundcake cheese, fried chicken, you know, I made a traditional shoebox and I get on the train and there's this older Black lady who gets on with me at the first stop. We were at Union Station in Los Angeles, and when I pulled out my shoebox, she said, "*Oh my God, you got a shoebox?*" And I said, "Yeeeah", and I had plenty. And so I was sharing with her and a couple got on the train celebrating their anniversary and we had a great ride from Los Angeles to here. I've lost contact with those people. She may have gone dancing to the heavens by now, but it was a great ride. And just to be able to teach our children about that and to get people to de-stress themselves by just getting on the train and riding. You can read a book. You can listen to music. You see this great scenery when you are on the train after they've had the snow and you're going through Donner Summer, that is beautiful and you're going down in the Truckee and all. So it's one of those things and I would love to be able to go to the 16th Street station and get on that train, but usually I have to get on it in Emeryville.

[00:55:22] **Interviewer:** Mm-hmm.

[00:55:23] **Ernestine:** When I'm going that way. When I'm going to Southern California, I get on the train at Jack London at C.L. Dellums.

[00:55:34] **Interviewer:** Related to. I know you were like a child when you took 16th Street Station and now you're like older now. What would you say is the experience between 16th Street Station and taking the C.L. Dellums station or the Emeryville station?

[00:55:51] **Ernestine:** The energy's not the same. The energy's not the same at all. [smiles]

[00:55:57] **Interviewer:** Can you go into like, what is, what is this energy that you're—is different?

[00:56:02] **Ernestine:** Well, when— like I said when I was a kid and we'd getting on the train you were all dressed up. Even when you got on the airplane, when I was a kid, you were dressed. People don't do that anymore. They'd get on the train, they get on the plane in their pajamas. Okay. I understand that. But there, there was something to be said about how we presented ourselves just to get on the train and have that experience. And people don't, people don't do it anymore.

[00:56:39] **Interviewer:** Mm-hmm.

[00:56:39] **Ernestine:** And we'd get on the train with our, with our blanket and our pillow 'cause we're getting on the train.

[00:56:51] **Interviewer:** Mm-hmm. That's true. When I think about it.

[00:56:55] **Ernestine:** And we had, like, when we would go to go South in the, in the winter we had travel quilts. There were quilts my mother had just for us to travel with because they were warmer [smiles]. So if something happened and we were someplace where it was really cold, we had that quilt. Yeah.

[00:57:20] **Interviewer:** I like that. I wanted to ask, do you think that's a tradition that she, that she brought along the—a traveling quilt?

[00:57:33] **Ernestine:** Well, well even then, like my grandfather was a quilter. My father's father, Mr. Jimmy, was a quilter. And I think that most Black people had quilts that your grandmother, your great-grandmother—someone made. And of course, as the quilts got older, then that became a quilt you did something else with, other than have on the bed, use it for a picnic or whatever. So I remember I had a blue quilt. My mother's was kind of orangish color and my father's was blue. And even when we'd be sitting here in the house watching television or something, or doing whatever we were doing we might wrap up in our quilt in the wintertime [rubs hands together]. It was a way of life.

[00:58:28] **Interviewer:** My family does that too. But we have blankets though.

[00:58:31] **Ernestine:** Yeah. But same thing.

[00:58:32] **Interviewer:** Mm-hmm.

[00:58:33] **Ernestine:** Same thing.

[00:58:33] **Interviewer:** Same thing. I think my, my sister, she crocheted a, a blanket.

[00:58:38] **Ernestine:** Mm-hmm [nods head].

[00:58:39] **Interviewer:** And she would wrap it.

[00:58:40] **Ernestine:** Mm-hmm.

[00:58:41] **Interviewer:** But yeah, that's, that is a common thing now that I think about it.

[00:58:43] **Ernestine:** Mm-hmm.

[00:58:43] **Interviewer:** I have, even in my apartment, I have blankets by my sofa, so that way if, if I get cold I can just, yeah.

[00:58:52] **Ernestine:** I have a throw here. [gestures with left hand toward throw]

[00:58:54] **Interviewer:** 'Cause you're gonna get cold.

[00:58:56] **Ernestine:** If you get cool. And if someone comes I have a foot stool that has throws in it to throw over if you get cold [points down toward the ground and moves finger around indicating the foot stool beside her].

[00:59:12] **Interviewer:** I think one of the last questions I kind of wanna ask and then I wanna ask if you want to add anything else. There's the Emeryville station in the C.L. Dellums station that basically opened like, like 1989 more or less because the earthquake that happened and that did damage to 16th Street Station.

[00:59:36] **Ernestine:** Correct.

[00:59:37] **Interviewer:** Which kind of showed, not showed, but led I would say more to the foreclosure of it?

[00:59:41] **Ernestine:** Correct.

[00:59:44] **Interviewer:** Do you think 16th Street Station would've still remained open if the other stations had not opened?

[00:59:51] **Ernestine:** Of course because people still rode the train. It's just a matter where they now embark on the train and where they get off it [shrugs shoulders]. 16th, well, you figure Emeryville and C.L. Dellums is still the first to last stop. The yard is still off of what's that 3rd street? Yeah. So. [smiles and shrugs shoulders]

[01:00:21] **Interviewer:** It would've been.

[01:00:22] **Ernestine:** For Amtrak.

[01:00:25] **Interviewer:** Is there anything else that you want to add that maybe I missed related to 16th Street Station or your time growing up? In Oakland, I would say in the glory of what is 16th Street?

[01:00:42] **Ernestine:** Well, I mean, everyone talks about 16th Street Station and the Porters and the waiters, but then there was the whole group of people who kept the trains going. And I think that they are part of the forgotten heroes like I was telling you about my mother knows women who cleaned the trains. And you had Black people who were engineers but couldn't be the 'engineer' [does quotation marks as she states this] because they were Black, but they knew how to operate that train.

[01:01:17] **Interviewer:** Right. Mm-hmm.

[01:01:18] **Ernestine:** So what about those people? So as we tell the story. We must include those people. That's why I would like to see Oakland—and I think that Oakland is in a unique position now with the 16th Street station to also tell the history of not only Black people in Oakland, but primarily Black people in Oakland because the station is in the heart of the Black community. But just all the other people who came to Oakland on the train [claps on the words, "on" "the" and "train"] because the train was the primary mode of transportation outside of the bus.

[01:01:59] **Interviewer:** Mm-hmm.

[01:02:00] **Ernestine:** And if people had a choice between the bus and the train, they wanted to train. [doorbell rings]

[01:02:03] **Interviewer:** Mm-hmm. Oh.

[01:02:07] **Ernestine:** Can we stop for a minute?

[01:02:10] **Interviewer:** So yeah, we can pause. Yeah.

{Takes 10 minute break}

[01:02:12] **Interviewer:** Okay.

[01:02:12] **Interviewer:** Be the recording.

[01:02:14] **Ernestine:** Okay.

[01:02:14] **Interviewer:** So you were talking about, as we're speaking about 16th Street Station, we shouldn't just focus in on the Pullman Porters but the other individuals who also were part of the station, who really like made the station, who they—

[01:02:28] **Ernestine:** Who kept the, who kept the station clean, who kept those beautiful marble floors and all polished. I mean, there, there was all these other services that went along with the 16th Street station [lifts hands and forms a circle as she speaks]. So, and most are Black people. So, we can't forget those people. We can't forget those children who stayed off the street. I was telling you about Tom Bowden because he had a little business where he was shining shoes. And what about the laundries that—for the Pullman Porters that kept their shirts starched in iron? Because you gotta remember, they had shirts and, and, and their jackets and all. They were impeccably clean. So somebody was doing that. And as a rule. I can't speak for other stations in this nation, but I know there were people in West Oakland that supported that. A lot of the Chinese laundries, you know, that's what happened. So we can't turn our back on the support of the industries that made the 16th Street station what it is.

[01:04:03] **Interviewer:** Mm-hmm. And with, with that being said, when you took the train, did you see any women who were called Car Porters?

[01:04:12] **Ernestine:** No, not when I was riding the train. It was all men.

[01:04:15] **Interviewer:** It was all men. You didn't see women?

[01:04:16] **Ernestine:** Yeah. That came later. That came later.

[01:04:17] **Interviewer:** Mm-hmm. Okay.

[01:04:19] **Ernestine:** Now when I ride the train, I see women doing that.

[01:04:21] **Interviewer:** Mm-hmm.

[01:04:22] **Ernestine:** But then that was all, that was a man's job. [smiles]

[01:04:25] **Interviewer:** It was only man.

[01:04:27] **Interviewer:** 'Cause they had like an experiment. where they had some women who were Car Porters and they, they were doing actually an excellent job, but the—so it didn't work out. So we're trying to see if anyone had any memory of any, any women who were Car Porters that apparently.

[01:04:45] **Ernestine:** No.

[01:04:45] **Interviewer:** Apparently not.

[01:04:46] **Ernestine:** No.

[01:04:47] **Interviewer:** Awesome. Is there anything else that you would like to add before we, we end the recording?

[01:04:55] **Ernestine:** I can't think of. You know, I'll think of a lot of things 40 minutes from now, but, no more than, we just can't forget everybody who made it, what it was and what it is now. You know, it's that history and when you, when you're writing history it's important— or you are recalling history. It's important in my opinion, that you make sure it includes everyone. Thank God for the Sleeping Car Porters. Thank God for A. Philip Randolph and C.L. Dellums and all those people who put that together because that was a form of oppression that we had to get past and we got through it. But there, like I was telling you about. What about the people who kept the stations clean? I—the station was always clean. Who kept the bathrooms clean? Who kept all that? The plumbers and all. Who kept that going? What about those people? Because they're all a part of that history too.

[01:06:16] **Interviewer:** Yeah. Thank you. Thank you so much.

[01:06:18] **Ernestine:** You are welcome.

[01:06:18] **Interviewer:** For recording. I'm gonna end it really quick. Thank you.

[01:06:21] **Interviewer:** We are recording again. And there was one part that you wanted to speak about, which was the migration of a lot of Black Greats.

[01:06:35] **Ernestine:** Yeah. A lot of the—a Black people who migrated to California. I can't think of any one Black person that I know of that has done anything of prominence in this city that didn't come through the 16th Street station or who didn't come via an automobile because there was a time when Black people, my parents came, like my aunt and uncle came. They had a place to live. My mother and father came. They stayed there. When my aunt and uncle bought a home, my mother and father was in this house. When their cousins came, they stayed in the house and then my parents bought a home. That was just a way of life. But when we take a look at the great Blacks who were here in this city. They came through the 16th street station. They came in as waiters and, and service workers of one sort of another. And they went on to do great things in the city. So when we talk about revitalizing the train station, we also revitalize that history. And we give thanks to those people who came here via the train 16th Street station. The ones who came by bus, and the ones who came by car. You know. And when we talk about the 16th Street station, we're talking about the passenger trains. But don't forget. We have all these Blacks who worked as longshoremen on the ports and what was tied to the ports? The trains. Box cars. But, the trains just the same. And there was a time when those box cars behind, you'd have so many tracks, was for passengers, and then the other was for the movement of goods. So it all ties together, so we don't wanna forget that either.

[01:09:18] **Interviewer:** Mm-hmm.

[01:09:19] **Ernestine:** It all, it all ties to the train.

[01:09:23] **Interviewer:** Thank you for sharing. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

[01:09:33] **Ernestine:** No. At this point, like I'd said. I, I'll think of things and I'll, I can always jot 'em down or something, and we can talk about them later, but the 16th street station was in the heart of the Black community, and like I said earlier, I wonder if that station was allowed to deteriorate the way it was because it wasn't downtown. If it had, you know, New York stations, all downtown. Chicago, downtown. Los Angeles, downtown. New Orleans downtown. Would it be different if that station had not been in the heart of Black community? If that station had been where the C.L. Dellums station is now, would it have ever been allowed to get to deteriorate the way it has? If it had been just where the C.L. Dellums station is? We'll never

know. But we do know that we can do what we can do to see to it that it never happens again.

[01:10:48] **Interviewer:** Thank you. Thank you. I'm gonna end the recording now.

[01:10:51] **Ernestine:** Okay.